**Who Am I?**

# **Unit 1**

Brian and Mike looked at each other and laughed. It was as if they both had the same thought. Thank goodness it was eighth period on Friday, at least for the next two days they wouldn’t have to see Zach in the same shirt and pants he had worn all week. It was only the first week of school, and he had already exhausted his wardrobe?

 Zach noticed Brian and Mike smiling his way. He thought they were **insinuating** that they wanted to talk to him. He walked toward them but soon realized that the boys were not in interested in him; they were only interested in making fun of him. He heard Brian say, “Does the kid live out of his car or something?

Mike replied, “No, but he does live in a homeless shelter.”

Brian added, “Why doesn’t his dad get a job?”

“I don’t think he has a dad,” Mike whispered.

“Well, then his mom should get a job!” Brian added vehemently.

When Zach heard this conversation, he turned and ran from the room with a tear **trickling** slowly down his cheek.

**\* \* \***

Brian’s dad wiped his hand across his brow, blew out the air he had been holding in his lungs, and let out a mournful sigh. This was the third time he had gone over their checkbook register, and for the third time, he came up with the same figure -- a paltry sum that would in no way last through the month. He would not be making his mortgage payment . . . again.

When Brian walked in from school, he noticed his dad at the dining room table. He couldn’t remember a time when he had seen his father so **sullen**. Brian had a million questions to ask his dad, like *What did it mean to be laid off? When would he be going back to work?* and *What was the big deal anyway?* Brian didn’t really want to **interrogate** his dad, but he would like to understand what was making his dad so sad and anxious.

Brian’s dad, Josh, looked up from the table and stared at Brian as if he were looking right though him.

“Are you alright, Dad?” Brian asked.

“No, not really, but regardless, I need you to go start packing your stuff. We are going to move to your grandmother’s while the house is on the market.”

Brian looked at his dad like he had gone insane. The house sold? Moving to Grandma’s? What was this nonsense his dad was babbling?

“Have you been drinking or something, Dad? You’re starting to worry me.”

“Mom, come in here quickly! Something is wrong with Dad,” Brian yelled toward the kitchen.

Josh rose out of his seat, pointed directly at Brian, and began the most **vicious** verbal reprimand he had ever given Brian.

“You are a spoiled little brat! You seem to think that you are the ruler of your own little **dynasty**! You are about to find out what other people have to deal with day in and day out. Your perfect little life is going to be severely **disrupted**. We will be virtually homeless; we will have very little money, and your mommy won’t be driving you to school anymore. You will be riding the bus – the same bus that picks up the kids at the homeless shelter. So, you had better get used to being that other kid real fast.”

When he had no words left, Josh stormed out of the room.

**\* \* \***

Brian walked by his dad, pulled his hood up over his head, and exited his grandmother’s house to wait for his new bus. He kept his hands in his pockets and his eyes looking toward the ground in the belief that no one would be able to recognize him that way.

When the bus pulled up, he entered without looking up and sat in the first seat he found open. He hoped no one would notice him. Everything went as planned until the bus made a sudden stop, causing Brian to look up reflexively. That is when he noticed Zach sitting in the seat **adjacent** to his, staring at him with a sorrowful look on his face.

“Hi, Brian,” Zach said tentatively.

“How did you know it was me?” Brian asked.

Zach just shrugged his shoulders and looked away.

Brian looked at Zach a while longer and noticed that he had on different clothes than he’d worn the week before. In fact, he looked as well put together as Brian did under the circumstances. The incident of him laughing at Zach the Friday before flooded back into his mind.

How could Zach still say hello to him when Zach had to know that he and Mike had been making fun of him and his situation. Now that Brian was basically in the same situation, he began to feel guilty about how he had treated Zach and, for that matter, others like him. Brian decided there had to be some way to **recompense** Zach for his own childish display.

“Hey, Zach! If you’re free, would you like to come over for dinner tonight?”

Zach looked at Brian to determine the seriousness of his request. When he was satisfied that Brian was asking in earnest, he nodded his head, and his face broke into a huge grin. Together the two boys **alighted** from the bus with a new outlook.

**\* \* \***

As Brian’s mom fixed plates of dinner and passed them around, his dad cleared his throat and said grace over the meal. When his father said, “Amen,” Brian worked up the nerve to ask a question that he hoped wouldn’t make his Dad mad at him again.

“Dad, what’s going to happen to us now?”

“Well, Brian. I am sure everything will work itself out in the end, but you have to understand that what we are dealing with is not a **trivial** matter,” his dad explained.

“I think I know that now,” Brian whispered.

“And, you also have to understand that our new living arrangement may just be a **foretaste** of what is in store for us for awhile. Your friend Zach here could probably fill you in on what I mean by that.”

Zach looked a bit shocked at Josh’s suggestion, but he was feeling comfortable enough to share a bit of his experience if it would help Brian grasp the reality of their plight.

“We lived with my grandma for awhile too, but it became too much for her, so we ended up moving into the homeless shelter. Mom has been looking for work, and I stay at the shelter to watch my sister while she is out looking. I resent my life because it has become so **humdrum**, the same thing day after day. Not to mention, my circumstances cause me to be bullied frequently at school. When I think about my future, it looks like a **barren** place with nothing to look forward to. I’m actually really sad and mad most of the time.

“You see, Brian, no one asks to be in this situation. I think everyone goes through the same experience as Zach so eloquently explained. But, just like his mom, most people don’t just give up. They keep trying and struggling until they inch their way out of it. The process may seem to be **interminable** -- it goes on and on and on -- but you go on to the next job interview, send out the next **resume**, and make the next phone call hoping one of them will **germinate** enough interest in you that they will give you an opportunity,” Josh explained with compassion.

Listening to his dad, Brian’s beliefs about life, maybe even prejudices, **hurtled** through his brain. He couldn’t believe he had treated Zach the way he had. He was in the same boat. Brian was going to have to **renovate** his thinking and form a more realistic view of life and people, but right at this moment he was getting really hungry. Thankfully, his mom saved him.

“Could we declare a **truce** on this life lesson discussion for the time being? I see a couple of boys who look awfully hungry. Let’s eat!”

**UNIT 1 VOCABULARY**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **WORD** | **DEFINITION in your own words from context clues** | **MEMORY TRIGGER** |
| insinuate |  |  |
| trickle |  |  |
| sullen |  |  |
| interrogate |  |  |
| vicious |  |  |
| dynasty |  |  |
| disrupt |  |  |
| adjacent |  |  |
| recompense |  |  |
| alight |  |  |
| trivial |  |  |
| foretaste |  |  |
| humdrum |  |  |
| barren |  |  |
| interminable |  |  |
| resume |  |  |
| germinate |  |  |
| hurtle |  |  |
| renovate |  |  |
| truce |  |  |